DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 251 FL 019 986

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TITLE Student Development Tutorship Programme, August/September 1991. An Evaluation and Report Back.
INSTITUTION Technikon M. L. Sultan, Durban (South Africa).
PUB DATE Sep 91
NOTE 18p.; Best copy available.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students; Developing Nations; *Disadvantaged; English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Limited English Speaking; Program Evaluation; *Remedial Instruction; *Second Language Instruction; Staff Development; *Tutorial Programs; Tutors
IDENTIFIERS Content Area Teaching

ABSTRACT

Initiatives are described that have been undertaken by the Student Development Tutorship Programme at the M.L. Sultan Technikon in South Africa, a program established in 1990 to provide assistance and support to disadvantaged students, primarily Black students from areas with inadequate facilities and instructors in the "homelands" and where English is taught as a second language. Components of the program include a commitment to educational development (academic, cognitive, and language development of students as well as teaching staff development), content-based language, integrated programs, multilingual classrooms, and a tutorship program. Aims and objectives of the tutorship program are outlined, and its implementation is described in terms of tutor performance and student participation. Data limitations preclude extensive evaluation of the program to date, but recommendations are offered regarding such issues as program scheduling and duration, cooperation between tutors and lecturers, the need to accommodate different needs of first and second language speakers, pre-test and post-test evaluation, and training sessions. Tutor and student comments are included. (LB)

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M. L. SULTAN
TECHNIKON

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

TUTORSHIP PROGRAMME

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1991

AN EVALUATION AND REPORT BACK

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Fay Patel : Student Development

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.1.1. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1.2. CONTENT - BASED LANGUAGE

1.1.3. INTEGRATED PROGRAMME

1.1.4. MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

2. TUTORSHIP PROGRAMME

2.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.2. STAFF

2.3. PROCEDURE AND CONTENT

2.4. EVALUATION

2.4.1. CONTENT BASED VERSUS NON-CONTENT BASED STAFF

2.4.2. EX-TEACHERS AND GRADUATES

2.4.3. TUTOR COMMENTS

2.4.4. STUDENT COMMENTS

3. CONCLUSION

3.1. LIMITATIONS

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Student Development was established in November 1990 to provide assistance and support to 'disadvantaged' students. For the past decade the term 'disadvantaged' has been widely used to describe the Black student who comes from education systems which are substandard; where English is taught as a second language, where teachers are unqualified or under qualified, where educational facilities are inadequate or lacking completely. These apartheid entrenched education systems operate within South Africa, in the townships and 'outside' South Africa, in the 'homelands'.

Black student enrolment has increased from 18 % in 1990 to 29 % in 1991. With the increase in the number of Black students it was perceived that further tutorial support provided by Student Development would compliment the main-stream academic programme.

Since education is a dynamic process, one that is constantly changing and developing, it becomes necessary for institutions to adapt to these changes. The academic support and bridging debate of the past decade had given way to a new, more favourable concept in the light of the changing educational and political climate.

There has been a major shift from the narrow racialistic, second language, condescending standpoint of academic support for Black, second language speakers to a more open, non-discriminating alternative: Educational Development.
This cocept aims at developing the full potential of all students and is rapidly replacing the old school of thought at most tertiary institutions. Educational development concentrates on developing the academic, cognitive and language skills of students.

Student Development initiatives, over the past year, must therefore be seen against this background as an attempt to seek relevance in the national education debate and to strive for excellence for all students.

1.1. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.1.1. EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Educational Development may be defined as the academic, cognitive and language development of all students as well as the development of and modification of teaching styles and evaluation of teaching objectives among staff members.

1.1.2. CONTENT - BASED LANGUAGE

Tertiary institutions, the University of Natal and Cape Town for example, are currently focusing on introducing content - based language development programmes instead of 'separate' language programmes. Mr. Ian Scott, Director of Academic Support Services at the University of Cape Town, at a one day symposium at the University of Natal on 21 October 1991 stated categorically that 'separate' programmes had proved problematic in the experience of the academic support programme at the University of Cape Town which has been in operation for over a decade. 'Separate' Language Programmes are problematic because they remain language programmes, taught in isolation with no relevance to the course students were registered for.

1.1.3. INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES

Mr. I. Scott mentioned that for 1992 they were looking towards an integrated programme.

The approach adopted in the Technikon Tutorship Programme was integrated on two levels:

a). Integrated into mainstream programme.

b). Integrated in terms of language, cognitive and academic skills based on course content.

Both levels of integration ensure relevance and thereby eradicate some of the problems mentioned by Mr. I. Scott such as irrelevance, poor attendance, racial biasness.

1.1.4. MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

The term multilingual classrooms refer to the variety of language groups found in the classroom. There may be at least three or more language groups present and each language group displays its specific culture. These are sometimes referred to as multi-cultural classrooms.

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The apartheid system has 'disadvantaged' us all, students and teachers. We're disadvantaged academically, psychologically and socially. Disadvantaged because we fail to recognize and understand our varying cultures. We come with limited knowledge about each other's culture and about the impact our culture has made on us.

We are all disadvantaged because we have been trained to think, teach and learn in a particular way using specific tools, in making references to textbooks, audio-visuals, libraries, to the mass media, the chalkboard. We do not know what it is to teach without them or to have to learn without them. Therefore, lecturer / teacher references, use of content terminology, vocabulary and 'relevant' examples may extend beyond the thinking and comprehension of all students.

2. THE TUTORSHIP PROGRAMME

The Tutorship Programme implemented for a period of eight weeks in Semester Two (August / Sept. 1991) took into consideration the debate on educational development nationally. Every attempt in this programme was made to respond to the relevant aspects of educational development and to avoid the problems experienced by other support programmes over the past decade.

2.1. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the Tutorship programme reflect the principal objectives of Student Development.

These are outlined below:

AIMS (Long term goals)

* To assist students in improving their language and learning skills while focusing on course content.
* To help students realize their full potential.
* To encourage students to become cognitively active.
* To guide students to take responsibility for their own learning.

OBJECTIVES (Short term goals)

* To set up content based support tutorials per department.

* To build Student Communicative confidence and competence.

* To introduce language and learning techniques which will enhance students academic growth.

This programme was based on similar teaching and learning guidelines as the Science Foundation Programme (SFP) 1. at the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus).

1. SFP is a year long foundation for Black students who pursue a Science-related degree which comprises courses in Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics and a course called Learning. Language and Logic (3L).

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2.2. STAFF : SEVEN TUTORS

In the eight week programme seven tutors were employed to provide an extra two hours of tutorials. Five of the tutors were ex-teachers (primary and secondary school) who had some language teaching knowledge and experience. Two tutors were graduates, one held a Science degree and the other an honours degree in Personnel Management.

Recruiting tutors who have relevant content based knowledge as well as language teaching experience and interactive skills is problematic.

The following tutors were appointed. Non-Content based tutors are marked N-CB, while Content based tutors are marked CB.

TUTORS	DEPARTMENTS	EX-TEACHERS	GRADUATES
MR. D.BANARD	PUBLIC ADMIN.	N-CB	
MS. C.GEDYE	PUBLIC HEALTH	N-CB	
MR. S.CHETTY	BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE		CB
MS. R.RAMSINGH	PUBLIC ADMIN.		CB
MS. N.SPURRIER	MARKETING & MANAGEMENT	N-CB	
MS. A. VALENTE	PUBLIC RELATIONS	N-CB	
MS. P.COBBLEDID	LIBRARY SC. & INFO SERVICES	CB	

2.3. PROCEDURE AND CONTENT

The seven tutors were appointed in seven departments. Each tutor taught for two hours a week. The tutor was attached to a department and was advised and guided on course content by the lecturer. The course content chosen by lecturers reflected concepts or areas students found problematic.

Tutors were given one hour training each week in communicative / interactive skills, cognitive and language skills. A pre and post test aspect was also built in but did not prove an appropriate measure because of the various factors which affected it.

2.4. EVALUATION

In attempting to evaluate the success of the programme it is only possible to offer a qualitative analysis.

2.4.1. CONTENT - BASED VERSUS NON-CONTENT BASED TUTORS

The non-content based tutors (ex-teachers) were able to cope with the tutoring task. They agreed that the one hour training and lecturer support and guidance prepared them for the tutoring. While one content-based tutor seemed more suited to the task because of the content knowledge, the other content based tutor seemed totally unsuited to the task and severely lacked interpersonal skills; enthusiasm for the project; creativity and innovative ideas.

It was clear that whatever the previous experience of the tutor, this type of tutoring demands interpersonal skills, enthusiasm, an open attitude for sharing experiences and ideas, a need to accept criticism as well as a creative and innovative spirit.

2.4.2. EX-TEACHERS AND GRADUATES

Both categories of participants with the exception of the one content based tutor, who proved unsuitable,(mentioned under 2.4.1.) seemed to adapt well to the task of tutoring at tertiary level or in multilingual classrooms before.

2.4.3. TUTOR COMMENTS

A. TUTORSHIP PROGRAMME

SUCCESS OR FAILURE

Five of the seven tutors felt that the programme was a success. Some explanations offered by tutors in support of their opinions are reflected below.

'From student evaluation forms, students unanimously agreed it was a good learning experience'. (A. Valente)

'As a result of specific skills taught to students, a definite improvement in their abilities / levels of confidence was observed'. (C. Gedye)

'It provided support for the students experiencing difficulty with their courses'. (N. Spurrier)

SKILL TAUGHT TO STUDENTS

Tutors agreed that broad category of skills were taught to students and these included language / communicative skills and learning and thinking details.

CONTENT BASED KNOWLEDGE VERSES NON-CONTENT BASED KNOWLEDGE

Tutors who did not have content based knowledge admitted that they felt that they may not cope but discovered that having content based knowledge was not crucial to a programme such as this.

'It is not necessary to have content based knowledge in a Skills Development Programme'. (R. Ramsingh)

'Content was not a problem. Of course in highly specialized or technical areas it could become one or increase the time necessary for preparation'. (D. BALMFORD)

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

Some of the problems encountered by tutors were largely of a practical / administrative nature.

Photocopying Facility

O.H.P.

Printing

Attendance : Where sessions were arranged outside of the mainstream timetable.

Punctuality : Students strolling in sometimes twenty minutes later.

Tests : System of Controlled Testing affected attendance. Class tests caused absenteeism.

Inadequate Lecturer interaction :
: Where the lecturer was not available or did not encourage close liason with the tutor.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Tutors suggested that the following options be exercised with a view to improving the programme.

- Lecturers and / or Departments provide the necessary technical / administrative support (ie. with photocopying / printing facilities and providing audio-visual aids).

- Tutorials be part of a mainstream timetable.

B. LECTURER / TUTOR INTEACTION

While a few lecturers gave full support and encouraged inteaction with tutors, there were other lecturers who gave no moral support or specific guidelines. Tutors who received proper lecturer guidance felt they were more successful in helping their students.

Tutors who themselves did not bother to approach lecturers after their initial introductory session found that they were working in isolation and could not share ideas adequately in the training session.

C. TUTOR NEEDS

Many of the needs mentioned here related to the technical / administrative needs mentioned under section A.

D. STUDENT PARTICIPATION

ATTENDANCE

Tutors felt that student participation (of those who attended) was very satisfactory.

'My classes were very responsive and an absolute pleasure to teach'. (A. Valente)

'....+/- 60 % of my students attended the tutorial regularly'. (R. Ramsingh)

'Students showed enthusiasm, keenness and willingness to learn / participate....' (C. Gedye)

OBSERVATION OF DEVELOPMENT

Tutors mentioned that development was observed, although it varied in degree and in specific skills.

'Language / writing / communicative skills improved, became more fluent / precise / accurate. Verbal confidence / expression also improved'. (C. Gedye)

'Students contributed more readily. Shared ideas and thoughts. Asked for assistance'. (R. Ramsingh)

'... they were more open and far less self-conscious'. (A. Valente)

'Students become more communicative'. (D. Banard)

E. TUTOR TRAINING PROGRAMME

TUTOR ATTENDANCE

A total of eight training sessions were held. With the exception of one tutor the others attended at least seven of the eight sessions:

Mr. D. Banard	7
Ms. A Valente	7
Ms. C. Gedye	7
Mr. S. Chetty	5
Ms. N. Spurrier	7
Ms. P. Cobbledid	7
Ms. R. Ramsingh	7

Tutors indicated that their regular attendance at the training session helped them in the tutorials.

'They stimulated new ideas'. (D. Banard)

'Training sessions - support units'. (R. Ramsingh)

'Provide new innovative ideas ' ways of approaching otherwise "dull" / mundane topics. (C. Gedye)

'In expansion of methodology'. (N. Spurrier)

F. TUTOR COMMENT

Some of the concerns raised under Tutor Comment focused on the following issues:

* Ensuring better attendance
* Timetabling of tutorial slot into mainstream timetable
* Need for closer liason between lecturer and tutor
* Pre-test and Post-test should be skills related rather than totally content based.

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2.4.4. STUDENT COMMENTS

Due to unforseen circumstances (eg. controlled testing procedure, the Student Development Tutorship Programme (SDTP) extending to the last week of Term Three) it was not possible to effectively conduct the student and lecturing staff evaluation schedules.

Some of the student comments, however, reflect a positive attitude towards SDTP and a favourable response to the notion of SDTP.

Student comments about the different aspects of the SDTP are quoted below.

It is important to take note of the positive student attitudes displayed by students on the Student Evaluation Schedule.

Students were requested to explain how the programme was beneficial, among other things, and some of the responses recorded follow.

' I learnt to organize my work and I also adapted to a very good way of studying'. (H. Sibusiso)

'Because it helped me to make it for the DP although the time was not enough'. (T.L. Ngapha)

'I know how to understand now and to write it was very difficult for me before the tutorship'. (L.B. Mwandla)

'My writing skills improved'. (A. Mudaly)

'It helped with my writing skills and also helped me to speak clearly'. (P. Misra)

'(a) It helped me understand the concept better.
(b) Gave me the know-how of using what was learnt'.
(anonymous)

'I learnt to learn with understanding'. (N. Makhaye)

In response to a question asking students whether they would recommend participation in the SDTP to friends, responses recorded were:

'Because it is more easy to participate in small groups than a big class'. (S. Hubert)

'My friends were participating very well. The only thing that affect them was the control tests'. (C.P.S. Zulu)

'So that he /she can improve his / her understanding'. (F.S. Radebe)

'Because it would help my friends too, because it helped me very, very much'. (L.B. Mwandla)

'They too would learn to improve their skills and make their workload seem easier'. (S. Clerk)

These are only some of the positive comments made by students who participated in the SDTP. Student evaluation of education processes are significant in helping us make relevant decisions about educational policies.

3. CONCLUSION

The Student Development Tutorship Programme at the M.L. Sultan Technikon attempted in a number of ways to address most of the problems of the 'academic support' notion of the past decade and to find solutions to some of these.

It is clear that some issues may continue to pose dilemmas in the future.

A quantitative component was built into this pilot study (ie. the pre and post testing) but could not be successfully implemented for reasons to be discussed under 3.1. below.

An evaluation of the Student Development Tutorship Programme can, therefore, only be appreciated from a qualitative perspective.

3.1. LIMITATIONS

Some of the factors which seriously limited this study are listed below:

* The SDTP was implemented late in the academic year.

* The duration of the programme was much too short for any significant impact to be made.

* The pre and post testing was not conducted in all departments simultaneously. The nature of the tests given differed from content based objectives to skills based objectives. The conditions under which the tests were given were not the same.

* The system of controlled testing interfered with the SDTP in terms of upsetting the organized pattern of tutorials. The duration of the controlled testing period coincided with at least two weeks of the SDTP thereby making it's(SDTP's) effectiveness even less assessible.

* Student attendance during and after the controlled testing period decreased. The end of the term period was another factor leading to the decrease in attendance.

* There was no accreditation principle built into the SDTP.

* Lecturer liason with tutors was, in some cases, totally inadequate to allow tutors to be more effective in the SDTP.

* Printing / photocopying / audio-visual facilities were inadequate.

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.2.1. TUTOR RECOMMENDATIONS

* Programme should start earlier in the year.

* SDTP should be an ongoing programme at least for six months and should be timetabled.

* Programme to operate at first and second year levels.

* The different needs of first and second language speakers to be accomodated.

* Greater co-operation between tutor and lecturer needed.

3.2.2. CO-ORDINATOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the tutors are endorsed and should be carefully considered in any future programme. Further recommendations are:

* Programme to be implemented at the beginning of the year.

* Programme should be slotted onto the mainstream timetable.

* Programme should run for six months for semester courses and for the whole year for annual courses.

* Tutors should be appointed in each department.

* Department to determine which core subject or which subjects should be serviced by the tutor.

* Department to attach tutor to a lecturer so that closer liason / supervision can be made possible.

* Number of hours for tutoring to be determined by department depending on nature of student needs.

* Pre and Post-testing component to be structured and implemented uniformedly in all departments. Departmental lecturers to co-ordinate and assess testing and performance.

* The SDTP should run alongside and beyond the controlled testing system.

* Some form of accreditation must be introduced by the department to encourage students to participate in the SDTP.

* Technical / administrative assistance (printing / photocopying / use of audio-visual aids) to be facilitated by department.

* Lecturers should attend training sessions with tutors to understand the nature of student / tutor problems and the techniques being employed to confront the problem.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this Student Development Tutorship Programme at the M.L. Sultan Technikon has succeeded in ascertaining student, staff and tutor needs / options in the implementation of such a programme. It is the first integrated educational development initiative at a technikon in the Natal region.